

BREAKING THE BORDERS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN NEOLITHIC. SCHEMATIC ART IN IBERIAN MEGALITHS

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Abstract: *The study of Iberian megalithic art has long demonstrated not only the contemporaneity of its engravings and paintings but also that both types of art are equally ancient in the post-glacial context. The iconography on the megaliths combines the largest amount of human images in hunting scenes, lineage and social aggregation of Iberian schematic art, if compared to the total number of sites. Interior and western regions of the Iberian Peninsula are presented here as key areas to discuss the elaboration of human imagery inherited from patterns that characterized the end of the last Ice Age. An integrative interpretation of open-air sites (engraved rocks, painted rock shelters, stelae, menhirs) and megaliths (stands, stelae, statuettes, decorated vessels) blurs classical Atlantic-Mediterranean boundaries. The role of Iberian images in Europe's funerary contexts is then more relevant than what has been attributed to them in the inventories of the last century.*

Keywords: *Megaliths; Symbol interaction; Neolithic; Human images; Scenarios of the dead.*

Resumo: *O estudo da arte megalítica ibérica tem mostrado, desde há longa data, não somente que as suas gravuras e pinturas são contemporâneas, como a antiguidade de ambas as manifestações no contexto pós-glaciar. A iconografia nas paredes dos megálitos combina a maior quantidade de imagens humanas em cenas de caça, linhagem e agregação social da arte esquemática ibérica, se comparada com o número total de sítios. As regiões interiores e ocidentais da Península Ibérica são apresentadas aqui como áreas-chave para discutir a elaboração de imagens humanas herdadas de padrões que caracterizaram o fim da última Idade do Gelo. Uma leitura integradora de grafismos ao ar livre (rochas gravadas, abrigos de rocha pintados, estelas, menires) e megalitismo (suportes, estelas, estatuetas, vasos decorados) esbate os limites clássicos Atlântico-Mediterrâneo. O papel das imagens ibéricas em contextos funerários da Europa é, pois, mais relevante do que refletem os estudos do século passado.*

Palavras-chave: *Megálitos; Interação simbólica; Neolítico; Imagens humanas; Cenários da morte.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of symbols that accompany the groups of Late Prehistory in the Iberian Peninsula has been conditioned by various historiographic factors that frames the ideological basis of distinction between a Mediterranean Iberia, with Cardial Neolithic, and an Atlantic Iberia, with megaliths. Both readings were accompanied by cultural sequences

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in which coastal navigation would have connected the east with the west of the Iberian Peninsula, assuming the demographic vacuum of the interior lands¹.

Late Iberian Prehistory was built on two repetitive constants. On the one hand, large gaps located in some territories from the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic (Meseta, atlantic façade, Andalusia) were reinforced in the first Neolithic (Meseta, atlantic façade, Andalusia, Cantabria and Galicia). On the other hand, there was a struggle between «Mediterranean civilization» and the indigenous emulation in later moments², in which Megalithic expressed the late arrival of the Neolithic to the Atlantic areas. These hypotheses have gone through various transformations regarding both ancient Neolithic and Megalithic contexts. In both cases, there are differences in concept and interpretation between Iberian archaeology and that of the rest of Europe³.

Although the panorama is beginning to expand, a part of research in Iberia continue to read the Neolithic Mediterranean as the only «colonizing force» in this territory, rather than considering the vast diversity of the previous local peoples and their multifocal development as demonstrated throughout the rest of Europe. On the contrary, the integration of the Iberian Megaliths in the Atlantic context has widened the range of more complex options. The most evident of these is the idea that the pre-Megalithic sites present versions of the first Neolithic not necessarily Cardial or in which the Cardial is part of more diverse records⁴. Currently, chronologies of the Iberian Neolithic in unexpected places like the Atlantic façade, Andalusia, or the Pyrenees demand a serious reflection on the unique role of the cardial to explain the oldest settlements of Iberian farmers. While there are many elements to consider, we are most interested in illuminating the role of graphic formulas with strong palaeolithic roots perceptible in the parietal and mobile art, but also in the decoration of the first ceramics⁵.

The Iberian Peninsula, with its rich repertoire of decorated sites from the Palaeolithic to the Iron Age, is a key area to consider when studying more dramatic symbols of Palaeolithic art, the role of rock-shelters with schematic paintings, the chronology and geographical implantation of elaborated scenes of death in the European megaliths, or the presence of human images on diversely sized supports in these contexts⁶.

We begin with the notion that schematic graphics are the consequence of solid learning systems and the transmission of techniques, themes, supports, and territories

¹ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2009.

² ALMAGRO BASCH, ARRIBAS PALAU, 1963.

³ LAPORTE, BUENO RAMÍREZ, 2016.

⁴ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2016: 162; CHAMBON, 2003; JOUSSAUME, 1981; SANCHES, NUNES, 2004.

⁵ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2016; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2022.

⁶ BARROSO BERMEJO, 2020; BUENO RAMÍREZ, 2020; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2005; HOFFMAN, 2020; SCARRE, 2020.

anchored in the oral tradition of Upper Palaeolithic hunter groups. Marking the sites with images that make them recognizable for both locals and strangers is one of humanity's oldest social customs⁷. From that point of view, the Mediterranean and Atlantic borders — arguably established through the colonization of Oriental or Mediterranean groups — are blurred. This text aims to explore the weight of the formulas associated with presumably Mediterranean schematic art in the more Atlantic context of post-glacial Iberian repertoires: the megaliths.

2. BETWEEN MEDITERRANEAN NEOLITHIC AND ATLANTIC MEGALITHIC BUILDERS: PAINTING AND ENGRAVING

A classical reading suggests that the supposed foreigner's arrival included the origin of a symbolic system captured in the territory by means of painted rock-shelters⁸. Two basic parameters were needed to assume this hypothesis. The depopulation after the Upper Palaeolithic, as we have already pointed out, would justify the total disappearance of Palaeolithic Art. In this hypothesis, schematic art paintings would be a new form of decoration without any inclusion of previous historical experiences. Along with this, it was assumed that the expansion of painted schematic art happened alongside the expansion of the first Neolithic ceramics. Two concepts were brought together in the same materiality of painted rock-shelters: that the technique of painting on parietal supports was a foreign novelty, and that this way of becoming visible in the landscape marked the advancement of the Cardial Neolithic. It was only available to those who had gotten in contact with the first Neolithic technologies. The concepts of demographic absence and colonization would characterize the position of Iberian schematic painting well into the 20th century.

At the end of this century, several novelties come together to strongly nuance and, in some cases, to dissolve the univocal relationship between rock-shelters with painted schematic art and the first Neolithic settlers in the Iberian Levantine. On the one hand, direct chronologies and archaeological contexts confirm that Palaeolithic art did not disappear but rather transformed and adapted to new contents⁹. These data cannot be separated from the reality that the supposed Epipalaeolithic and Mesolithic depopulation is not sustainable to current knowledge¹⁰. On the other hand, schematic painted art does not stick to the classical areas of expansion of the Neolithic Levantine — essentially

⁷ BUENO RAMÍREZ, 2009; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2020.

⁸ ACOSTA MARTÍNEZ, 1968; MARTÍ OLIVER, HERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ, 1988.

⁹ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2016, 2020; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, ALCOLEA GONZÁLEZ, 2007, 2009; RIVERO, RUIZ LÓPEZ, 2018.

¹⁰ FERNÁNDEZ-LÓPEZ DE PABLO *et al.*, 2019; PARDO-GORDÓ, CARVALHO, 2020; PEYROTEO, 2016.

Andalusia, in the classical thesis — but covers almost all of Iberia¹¹. The same can be said of the Cardial ceramics detected in unknown areas and associated with other non-Cardial ceramics, but with ancient chronologies and decorations related to Schematic Art¹².

These two major changes cannot be properly assessed if they are not related to the evolving study of first farmers in the rest of Europe. The documentation of schematic paintings in unknown European settings reveals a reality with deep roots in the systems inherited from the hunters of the European upper Palaeolithic to mark the territory¹³. This evidence does not prevent us from defining areas of connectivity based on the analysis of the most outstanding symbols.

The Iberian west façade — referred to as the birthplace of Atlanticism by some authors — was one of the supposedly unpopulated sectors. There would be no Upper Palaeolithic populations, despite rich Epipalaeolithic and Mesolithic evidence of the shell middens of the Tajo and Sado. There would not be a first Neolithic phase in the Atlantic territories, either.

Advances in research have been devastating for these hypotheses. The repertoire of hunting sites from the Upper Palaeolithic has transformed the image of depopulated sectors. These sites are accompanied by impressive open-air Palaeolithic art, unique in its intensity as far as Europe goes¹⁴.

The same has occurred in the rest of Atlantic Europe. The population of the Upper Palaeolithic has symbols such as those recognized in classical contexts with a long chronology¹⁵. A pre-Neolithic phase is also documented, which sometimes is present with cardial characteristics. Therefore, megaliths are part of the Neolithic sequences in Europe and not a late product of the resilience of coastal Mesolithic groups. Recently, the discovery of paintings, with direct dating on the supports of megaliths from the Atlantic coast beyond Iberia, creates a reasonable expectation about the presence of schematic art in these regions¹⁶.

In the Iberian Atlantic façade, schematic painting is discovered insofar as prospecting is carried out with specific objectives. The working hypotheses based on the information obtained from the study of Megalithic art have been very positive. The integration of the techniques and themes of documented images on schematic art Megalithic

¹¹ BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BUENO RAMÍREZ, 2016; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2006, 2009; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2016a; FIGUEIREDO, BAPTISTA, 2013; LANCHARRO GUTIÉRREZ, BUENO RAMÍREZ, 2017; MARTINS, 2013; RODRÍGUEZ RELLÁN, FÁBREGAS VALCARCE, CARRERA RAMÍREZ, 2019; SANCHES, 1990, 2016; SANTOS, CRUZ, BARBOSA, 2017; SASTRE BLANCO, 2006; UTRILLA-MIRANDA *et al.*, 2016.

¹² ALDAY *et al.*, 2019; CARRASCO RUS *et al.*, 2015; CARVALHO, 2019: 20; DINIZ, 2011; FÁBREGAS VALCARCE *et al.*, 2019.

¹³ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2020; DEFASNE *et al.*, 2019; LAHELMA, 2006.

¹⁴ BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BUENO RAMÍREZ, 2009; GAMEIRO *et al.*, 2020.

¹⁵ FIGUEIREDO *et al.*, 2020; NAUDINOT *et al.*, 2017.

¹⁶ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2016b; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2022.

supports led us to model survey systematics for the detection of paintings and open-air engravings contemporary to these funerary versions¹⁷. These results encouraged targeted surveys in sectors with a visible abundance of decorated megaliths, supposedly without open-air painted rock-shelters¹⁸. The case of Galicia is the most revealing, as recent discoveries of decorated rock-shelters have been carried out. It is reasonable to expect similar discoveries in Huelva, where the knowledge of painted megaliths has increased notably in recent years¹⁹.

3. UPDATING QUESTIONS ABOUT BORDERS IN ATLANTIC POST-GLACIAL ART

Concentric circle engravings have been described as the most identifying item in Atlantic art. From the works of Herity²⁰ to the most recent readings, these concentric images have been associated with an Atlantic art that in the British Isles has been powerfully developed in both megaliths and open-air, on rocks and on menhirs²¹. These forms constitute a compact series in which deep engravings — sometimes accompanied by abrasion — reach a high degree of expressiveness through the strong contrast of light and shadow on the surface of the supports. Any light, of the sun or fire, would produce an impression of *chiaroscuro* and movement.

The item that most characterizes Mediterranean art is the human image that, in various schematic versions, stars in a great number of painted decorations.

This focus on two themes — complex engraved circles and painted human images — has eschewed the representativeness of anthropomorphic supports in the Atlantic area, in the case of steles, figurines and menhirs²². In the same way, general interpretations have marginalized equivalent graphic formulas (concentric circles) in other areas of the Iberian Peninsula²³.

The search for Atlanticism in the Iberian Northwest was centered on the Galician petroglyphs, an increasingly large group of open-air rocks whose study has advanced the definition of their territory and modes of documentation, even with little knowledge of their archaeological contexts²⁴. Two iconographic aspects are outside the scope of Atlanticism in the Iberian Northwest. The first is the wide relationship between

¹⁷ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1992: 559; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2006; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2004, 2008, 2009a; ROGERIO-CANDELERIA *et al.*, 2018.

¹⁸ BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2012: 124.

¹⁹ BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2018; RODRÍGUEZ RELLÁN, FÁBREGAS VALCARCE, CARRERA RAMÍREZ, 2019; SANTOS-ESTEVEZ, TEJERIZO-GARCÍA, ALONZO TOUCIDO, 2020.

²⁰ HERITY, 1974.

²¹ BRADLEY, 2020: 57; SHEE-TWOHIG *et al.*, 2010.

²² BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2015: 57; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2018; KOHRING, 2013; L'HELGOUACH, 1983; SCARRE, 2009; THOMAS, 2005.

²³ BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 1998; GUIDOTTI *et al.*, 2011; GOMES, 2004.

²⁴ SANCHES *et al.*, 2021; RODRÍGUEZ RELLÁN, FÁBREGAS VALCARCE, CARRERA RAMÍREZ, 2019.

concentric circles and deer, which is unparalleled in the panels of the Atlantic façade. However, some painted panels from the South propose interesting references, the most famous of which are on the shelters in the surroundings of Tajo de las Figuras, Cadiz. On the other hand, scarce representation of concentric circles appears in the decoration of that sector's megaliths. In any case, we will remember that until documentation was updated, the wide register of paintings in Galician dolmens was not recognized²⁵, so it is feasible that more engraved concentric themes will be recognized when documentation is implemented to study the engravings in the Galician megaliths. We have already pointed out some signs of contemporaneity between megaliths and petroglyphs²⁶, which should be purely logical in the context of the hypothesis about the impact of Atlantic art in Galicia. Nevertheless, megaliths with concentric circle decorations have outstanding examples in the Bay of Biscay, Catalonia and Andalusia²⁷. This evidence does not appear exclusively on the supports of the dolmens, but also on open-air outcrops or in rock shelters, as well as on some stelae²⁸.

If we extend this hypothesis to the North of Portugal, as it has been done in recent years²⁹, the presence of open-air sites is also remarkable. The dolmens of Aboboreira and Portela do Pau 1 with painted concentric circles and the other engraved³⁰, are added to the painted concentric circle of the dolmen of Arquinha da Moura, supported by a human figure, and to repeated semicircular forms of the Mamoia de Taco³¹, Viseu, which we also know from the necropolis of Montefrio, in Granada, associated in all cases with human figures³². The first two monuments have chronologies from the V/IV millennium BC, confirming the antiquity of these open-air formulas³³. This antiquity is fully ratified in the rest of the European Atlantic, where concentric circle decorations are dated from the V millennium BC in the wooden post of Maerdy³⁴, and oldest chronologies for the monument of Gavrinis³⁵ are also known.

Transferring this variability to other material contexts, the anthropomorphic figures that accompany a good part of the Iberian Megalithic deposits were supposed

²⁵ CARRERA RAMÍREZ, 2011.

²⁶ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1992.

²⁷ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2007, 2009b; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2009, 2013; VEGA DEL SELLA, OBERMAIER, 1926.

²⁸ ACOSTA MARTÍNEZ, 1968: 119-121; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2009a; MOYA I GARRA, MARTÍNEZ RODRÍGUEZ, LÓPEZ-MÉLCION, 2010; REDONDO ORTEGA, MARTÍNEZ RODRÍGUEZ, 2021.

²⁹ ALVES, REIS, 2009.

³⁰ JORGE *et al.*, 1997; SOUSA, 1988.

³¹ ALVES, CARVALHO, 2017.

³² BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2013: 38.

³³ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1992, 2002; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2007: 596; CRUZ, 1995.

³⁴ JONES, 2013.

³⁵ CASSEN *et al.*, 2016.

to be absent in the Northwest until the discovery of the Dombate dolmen, Galicia, which authenticated an increasing number of anthropomorphic stone pieces and simple pebbles from the Mesolithic tradition³⁶. From its northwestern adscription to its current location, today we know that these figurines also appear in the Cantabrian Sea³⁷, as well as in many megaliths of the South, especially those positioned in its external areas³⁸. The records continue to grow: Chã de Arcas, Vila Real, Alcalar and Cabeço da Anta, Proença-a-Nova (Portugal), Panoria, in Granada and dolmen de la Peña, excavated in 2020, in Antequera³⁹. Its presence at Breton Megalithic sites, or in grouped menhirs in the same area⁴⁰ abounds with the idea that human images in the Atlantic Megaliths have a greater role than once assumed in classical hypotheses. Some of these pieces show eyes by means of concentric circles, as in the classical Iberian *idol's* typologies, adding a positive argument to value some of the complex circles as solar representations.

There has also been an increase in the documentation of steles inside tombs. Known through the publications of Crato and Nossa Senhora da Esperança⁴¹, we have maintained their role in the construction of Megalithic scenarios. The painted clay stele of Montelirio, Seville, is added to those recently detected in Panoria or in Cabeço da Anta to confirm their role in the megaliths, without forgetting other stelae outside dolmens⁴². Among these — Pena Tú, Tabuyo, Sejos — we will not fail to acknowledge that they are partially detected on panels of Galician petroglyphs⁴³, adding another element that appears equally in Megalithic contexts of the South and North of the Peninsula, including petroglyphs. In this sense, we proposed to classify these decorated rocks of the Northwest as panel-stones, a system that we know well in sets of open-air engravings in the Alps⁴⁴.

The case of the stele of Bury, in the tomb of the same name, is added to the case of the stele at the entrance of some chambers of Barnenez's tumuli, or to several other pieces at New Grange, to support the hypothesis that the megaliths combine the greatest technical and thematic richness in all known post-glacial art⁴⁵. All are in liminal places within the tombs, in some cases positioned exactly at the point of entry of the sun at the solstices and equinoxes⁴⁶. The role of human images as orthostats or covers adds

³⁶ BELLO DIÉGUEZ, 1995; ARIAS CABAL, 1990.

³⁷ BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2009.

³⁸ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2005: 632.

³⁹ BUENO RAMÍREZ 2020; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2007; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2011; FÁBREGAS VALCARCE, RODRÍGUEZ RELLÁN, PAZ CAMAÑO, 2020; PARREIRA, MORÁN HERNÁNDEZ, 2021; SANCHES *et al.*, 2021.

⁴⁰ BENETEAU-DOUILLARD, 2012; GIOT, 1987; KOHRING, 2013; LARGE, 2010.

⁴¹ BREUIL, 1917.

⁴² BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2005: 589.

⁴³ FÁBREGAS VALCARCE *et al.*, 2004.

⁴⁴ ARCÁ, FOSSATI, 2006.

⁴⁵ BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2019.

⁴⁶ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2000; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2016a.

sculptural records either taken from ancient sites or made to compose a scene of very elaborate supports, an aspect applicable to all the Atlantic Megalithic⁴⁷.

It is widely accepted that the art of European megaliths is considered Atlantic⁴⁸. The typical characterization of megalith decorations as geometrical engravings has contributed to the definition of Atlantic art, which includes the series of concentric undulations and concentric circles⁴⁹. These series are well documented in contemporary chronological movable materials, specifically in the LBK ceramics, whose documentation in Brittany cannot be isolated from the close relationship established between its oldest tumuli⁵⁰ and the way of building/designing Danubian houses. The decorations' connections in horizontal or vertical wolf tooth bands are clear in the Neolithic ceramics of the cardial area. These ceramics are also documented in Brittany and Iberia, along with other evidence related to LBK groups⁵¹. On the other hand, in the British Isles, concentric circles have been related to the Carrokweel type pottery and with Groved ware⁵², a reference to the III millennium for the expansion of ancient roots themes. Still, we should not forget that the dates of megaliths decorated in the UK reach the first half of the IV millennium BC⁵³.

The circulation of prestigious raw materials, which points to the movement of variscites between Huelva, Zamora and Brittany, is not alien to this cultural picture. The documentation of painting in Breton and Northern French megaliths, with direct data on the pigments, corroborates the dynamic role of Iberia in the symbolism of Atlantic megaliths opening new lines of research to confirm the real impact of these techniques and their themes in the northern area of the Atlantic façade⁵⁴. Some of the pigments are part of circuits like those of prestigious objects, another novelty that will produce more knowledge as the characterization of pigments in painted decorations of megaliths is extended. Now, we can confirm that since the beginning of the IV millennium, the Iberian Megalithic tombs present cinnabar (bright red) in the coloring of corpses and deposits, which includes some anthropomorphic figures⁵⁵. The cinnabar coming from the mines of Almadén in the interior of Iberia had been used since the oldest Neolithic⁵⁶, reaching the South of France and forming part of the colorations of anthropomorphic pieces associated with megaliths⁵⁷. In this case, the role of Iberia in the generation of these rituals is convincing.

⁴⁷ BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2016b; L'HELGOUACH, 1996; SCARRE, 2009; SHEE TWOHIG, 1981:126; STOUT, STOUT, 2008.

⁴⁸ SHEE TWOHIG, 1981.

⁴⁹ SHEE TWOHIG, 1981:113.

⁵⁰ CHAMBON, THOMAS, 2010.

⁵¹ BORÍĆ, PRICE, 2013.

⁵² SHEE-TWOHIG, 1981: 125; SHERIDAN, 2004.

⁵³ WYSOCKI *et al.*, 2013.

⁵⁴ BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2012; 2015a; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2019; HERNANZ *et al.*, 2016.

⁵⁵ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2010; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2016b.

⁵⁶ HUNT *et al.*, 2011.

⁵⁷ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2019; D'ANNA, 2015; MASSON *et al.*, 2020.

Recent discoveries ratify the suggested contemporaneity of a certain combination of symbols in the same territories. Painted rock-shelters, steles, menhirs, and anthropomorphic portable pieces, as well as open-air engravings and the rich decoration of some dolmens, assert a greater versatility of so-called Atlantic art in its supposed focal zone (specifically the Iberian Peninsula). These confirmations should create a more nuanced discussion. The data on megalithic art, its techniques, and its direct chronologies, constitute the most convincing argument for a multifocal reading, far from the Atlantic/Mediterranean dichotomy that has been increasing in recent years. The border line is being moved (further north or west), a resource that will soon prove ineffective, in accordance with the progress of the records⁵⁸.

Perhaps the most realistic question at our current state of knowledge should focus on explaining some of the differences between all areas of the so-called Atlantic art present in the megaliths. The British Isles have been characterized by their almost exclusively geometrical contents. But there are other themes (weapons and objects), in addition to suns that are hidden in portable art⁵⁹. These contents are badly compared with those of French Brittany. Its dolmens contain narrative themes easily connected to those of the Iberian menhirs, especially human images accompanied by axes and crocks. Both objects are part of funerary deposits, but as its materiality have only been documented in the Iberian Peninsula⁶⁰. Considering that some of the axes detected in Brittany could have come from the area of the Alps⁶¹, the connectivity between the Atlantic façade is compatible with its interactions with the continent. Thus, we perceive a rich and varied cultural background that allows us to understand the presence of concentric circular themes in outstanding megaliths of Iberia, Brittany and the British Isles, sometimes clearly related to human figures, from engraved and painted images, to figurines or steles and menhirs sometimes as part of their supports. Axes, crocks, snakes, and concentric circular themes (perhaps related with sun images) are basically contemporary forms sometimes associated with angular geometric content. Other themes such as suns and human images — including the steles engraved on the hypogea of the Marne — fit into the Iberian theme, pointing to similar chronologies in the advanced IV millennium or III millennium⁶².

Focusing on the Iberian Peninsula, the northwestern zone does not respond to the exclusive geometrical contents described in traditional historiography (concentric themes in the open-air and in dolmens). In the case of open-air engravings, the thematic variety is greater than the classic Atlantic: concentric circles, a panoply of weapons, arms

⁵⁸ ALVES, REIS, 2009: 67; SANTOS-ESTEVEZ, TEJERIZO-GARCÍA, ALONSO TOUCIDO, 2020.

⁵⁹ BARROSO BERMEJO, BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2021; EOGAN, 1999; JONES, DÍAZ-GUARDAMINO, 2019.

⁶⁰ BUENO RAMÍREZ, 2020.

⁶¹ CASSEN *et al.*, 2019.

⁶² ARMITAGE *et al.*, 2020; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2022.

and animals or authentic steles reiterate formulas of schematic art, whose extension at sites with open-air engravings is known in areas such as the mountainous landscapes of the Alps⁶³. Therefore, the levels of connectivity indicated by their iconography are wider. The variability of the so-called Atlantic art is confirmed without difficulty in different areas of Europe, when carrying out detailed studies⁶⁴.

The answers are not simple, but they must emerge through studies that integrate the graphic versions in each of these territories. Offering panoramic views of one type of record without combining it with the rest leads to hypotheses that are distorted when handled in broader contexts — contexts that are necessary to overcome a discussion that is sometimes observed as circular. We could even hyperbolize and affirm that the data on open-air art, in megaliths, stelae and menhirs of the northwest of the Iberia do not fit the definition of Atlantic art when considered together because they follow the classical hypothesis.

4. IBERIAN MEGALITHIC ART AS A CASE STUDY OF SCHEMATIC ART

We argue that megalithic art is the funerary facet of schematic art, a hypothesis that recent inventories have confirmed⁶⁵.

E. Shee's inventory established the difference between Iberian Megalithic art and that of the rest of the Atlantic façade, in images of a narrative style. The author explained that the Iberian Mediterranean facet would be characterized by its use of painting⁶⁶. The group of painted dolmens in Viseu, in the North of Portugal, represented this facet. Anthropomorphs, suns and snakes, in that order, were added to more «Megalithic» forms assumed to be Atlantic, especially angular, or circular geometric decorations, as well as objects. The most outstanding was a piece with a double body, trapezoidal-triangular associated with a «handle». The author called it «the thing» because we do not know the real piece it represents, as happened for a long time with «l'objet» carried by the statues-menhir of the South of France. The *thing* is one of the oldest decorations in the Galician and Northern Portuguese megaliths, generally on menhirs and reused steles⁶⁷. This antiquity is comparable to the formulas that have been named this way in the French Brittany. So far, the Iberian ones are quite like to each other, with identical working techniques and average sizes. On the contrary, the Breton ones are more varied in size and form, having even proposed that they could represent sperm whales⁶⁸.

⁶³ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2005; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2009: 902.

⁶⁴ VALDEZ-TULLET, 2019.

⁶⁵ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1992: 561; 2006a; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2013, 2016a; SANTOS, CRUZ, BARBOSA, 2017.

⁶⁶ SHEE TWOHIG, 1981:13.

⁶⁷ BARROSO BERMEJO, BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2021; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2016b.

⁶⁸ CASSEN, VAQUERO LASTRES, 2003.

In all the human images documented in the Iberian dolmens, the variety of schematic art is gathered from the most naturalistic figures to the most abstract, with the wide documentation of scenes being one of its most revealing elements.

In the naturalistic images, the filler painting has an outstanding role, in front of the contour paintings that characterize the most schematic figures of ramiforms⁶⁹, cruciform⁷⁰, anchoriform⁷¹ or beside the human types deemed schematic by P. Acosta⁷². These forms appear equally in the North and in the South of the Peninsula, sometimes proposing remarkable specializations, which also happens with open-air schematic art⁷³.

The Viseu group was positioned as a naturalistic pictorial group in the general evaluations. But a detailed analysis, aside from revealing the prominence of engraving in these sites⁷⁴, points to the close contemporaneity between the more naturalistic and more schematic versions. As in the rock-shelters, the sun and occasional exhibitions of hunting or lineage are the protagonists of funeral discourses. Therefore, the funeral scenes not only show forms and techniques comparable to those of schematic painted art, but also share their most defining themes.

E. Shee⁷⁵ highlighted the prominence, in the painted dolmens of Viseu, of a motif that she called skeuomorphic because of its relationship to stretched skin. Open arms, sometimes raised, a prominent head (one wearing a cap or an ornament), a wide body with a garment that reaches the feet and, sometimes, an indication of the male sex. Its outstanding size and static position facing the spectator in the front of the chamber (normally in its upper third), define a character that attracts the eye, especially if we consider that it would receive sunlight because of its position in the chamber. To our current knowledge, these characters reach a great level of representation in the indicated area and begin to have evidences in Galicia. At least one of them is dated in very old chronologies: Anta do Serramo⁷⁶.

These characters share the stage with other naturalistic and schematic human figures whose number is especially outstanding (Fig. 4).

The first discovery of a hunting scene in Lubagueira came to be interpreted as a rare case of Levantine art⁷⁷. Today, they are common in the iconographic Schematic

⁶⁹ Chão Redondo and Pedralta (Northwestern Iberia), Vega del Guadancil, Toniñuelo, Maimón I, Magacela (Southwest Iberia), Dolmen of Piat, Mané Bras (France), Lougcrew (Ireland).

⁷⁰ Castiñeira I, Forles (Northwestern Iberia) adding to their dispersion in the parietal schematic art in the South Iberia, following ACOSTA MARTÍNEZ, 1968: 199.

⁷¹ Menga, Viera, Pozuelo 2, necrópolis de las Aguillillas, Cortijo de Alcaide (South Iberia).

⁷² ACOSTA MARTÍNEZ, 1968: 191.

⁷³ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1997a.

⁷⁴ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1992: 515-521; CARVALHO, ALVES, 2018: 445; SANCHES, 2009, 2010; SANTOS, CRUZ, BARBOSA, 2017.

⁷⁵ SHEE TWOHIG, 1981.

⁷⁶ CARRERA RAMÍREZ, FÁBREGAS VALCARCE, 2002; STEELMAN *et al.*, 2005.

⁷⁷ LEISNER, RIBEIRO, 1968.

art repertoire explicit in megaliths, engravings and open-air paintings⁷⁸. These are scenes of a narrative nature related to deer hunting, accompanied by dogs, and carried out with bows and arrows. The deer hunting scene in Lubagueira's L6 is very close to the best preserved one in Juncais' C1 upright, or the more recently documented one in Arquinha da Moura. The anthropomorphs of these scenes with zoomorphs coincide with two representations of skeuomorphs. The most outstanding is in the front of Arquinha da Moura, also accompanied by deer in the upper part, and undoubtedly male⁷⁹. Juncais is the site, until now, with most anthropomorphic representations since it adds two skeuomorphs and six more anthropomorphs. Juncais also combines several anthropomorphs.

Arquinha da Moura gathers revealing iconography of the combination we have described. A skeuomorph in a preeminent and central position is surrounded by schematic anthropomorphs, sometimes with bows and arrows that shoot deer, which are set off by dogs. The scene is arranged by means of small figures in lateral perspective, while the central character is read in a frontal perspective. The concentric circular form carried by the central human image of Arquinha da Moura would fit in the «Atlantic art» definition. We will add that deer hunts are well documented scenes in both painted and engraved schematic art. The famous scene of the anthropomorphic figure engraved in the Tagus River who raises a dead deer associated with a sun would fall within these narratives⁸⁰. In the same territory, the decoration of the schematic deer and sun of the dolmen of Maimon, in Alcantara, probably alludes to hunting⁸¹.

In other cases, the human figures show binary associations. In these pairs, it is common that a character is older than another, with slightly arched legs and arms down in an attitude of dynamism, which is also seen in the solitary individual engraved in the dolmens of A Golada or Afife⁸². Although these figures tend to be in the front area of the chamber, there is more positional variability than those known so far by the skeuomorphs. Sometimes they are arranged in clearly hierarchical situations «welcomed» by a large skeuomorph, as in the support of Arquinha da Moura. The double groups of the support C16 of Orca do Tanque are very indicative of binary associations. Both pairs show a remarkable dissymmetry in size between components, and the one below presents the character on the left as a skeuomorph smaller than the most common. It's reasonable to suppose that these differences mark the gender of the images. Valuations in relation to aggregations of individuals connected by lineage, or couples of different sexes, as seems to be the case of Orca do Tanque, point out the variability of these associations; as such, we should not discard relations between mothers and children, as in the

⁷⁸ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2006a, 2006b.

⁷⁹ SHEE TWOHIG, 1981: Figs. 45-47.

⁸⁰ GOMES, 2000.

⁸¹ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2006b; LÓPEZ-MONTALVO, 2018.

⁸² FÁBREGAS VALCARCE, PENEDO ROMERO, 2001; SILVA, 1997.

famous couple of the Minateda rock-shelter in Albacete or the couples and scenes of the Cova del Demo in Asturias⁸³. The rock-shelter of Fraga d'Aia in Northern Portugal, with its naturalistic human images, has also been proposed as a reference for Megalithic paintings⁸⁴. It should not be overlooked that schematic art has abundant naturalistic human images, sometimes associated with suns and oculars. A good example is the funerary rock-shelter of the Peña Escrita, in Alicante⁸⁵.

Padrao's individuals, painted in red with black details and wearing a tight tunic at the height of the belt and a band that goes to the back, is a special case that references how to carry a bow or some other object. His close relationship with snakes' themes fits into another of the Megalithic thematic areas. From its oldest expressions, the statue-menhir of Navalcán, Toledo, explicitly verifies the association reiterated by open-air menhirs, as we have pointed out above. Snakes and human figures are part of the Iberian and Breton Megalithic iconography⁸⁶.

Some figures related to the version of the «idol», in Brittany, are present in Iberia — for example, in the uprights of Huelva's dolmen of Soto, either in the form of a stele incorporated into the monument (I19 support) or in its version of a trapezoidal figure with projected lines, as also appears in the dolmen of Escariz (Northwest Iberia). Its similar figures, associated with long appendices, have been pointed out in some Galician petroglyphs⁸⁷. The C14 data of a trapezoid with a vertical appendix in the Vilvenard hypogeum⁸⁸ was painted in carbon black on a simple engraved trapezoid shape, offering an interesting case study of these sequences (engraving/painting) that allows us to link the presence of an appendix, a figure from the III millennium BC.

Other schematic human figures in Iberian Megalithic decorations are associated with one another. This is the case of the great branch-shaped dolmen of Maimon 1 in Alcantara, with a sun on its head and more branches beneath — an association repeated in the monuments of Vega del Guadancil and Toniñuelo with solar and ocular figures. These are all well-known types of schematic art from the southwestern region⁸⁹. Some more abstract forms like reticulates have been related to these ramiforms, categorized as inscribed ramiforms. In any case, there is no doubt that they belong to the repertoire of schematic art and their engraved⁹⁰ and painted⁹¹ versions appear in megaliths of the North and South of the Peninsula. The reticulated/ramiform stele on the front

⁸³ BLAS CORTINA, CARROCERA FERNÁNDEZ, 1985.

⁸⁴ SANCHES, 2009.

⁸⁵ BARCIELA GONZÁLEZ, 2020: Fig. 4; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1992.

⁸⁶ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1995.

⁸⁷ PEÑA SANTOS, REY GARCÍA, 2001.

⁸⁸ ARMITAGE *et al.*, 2020.

⁸⁹ ACOSTA MARTÍNEZ, 1968: 124; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2003.

⁹⁰ PIÑÓN VARELA, BUENO RAMÍREZ, 1983.

⁹¹ SANCHES, 2001.

of the Cabeço do Bique 1⁹², reveals a sculptural version that mirrors other forms in Megalithic contexts of the Southwest.

Some of the scenes starring the ramiforms fit with the hypothesis of lineage exhibition pointed out above, which has also been valued for scenes painted on the rock shelters. The engraved figures of the support D24 of the Soto's point to another scene of hierarchical aggregation of individuals⁹³. The decoration on one of the upright paintings of Porto has been interpreted by Breuil as the sum of bitriangular and triangular figures like «almeriense» idols types. The presence of this kind of image inside a decorated plaque from the Lapa do Bugio is a convincing confirmation⁹⁴. It is an interesting hypothesis that defines this support as another exhibition of lineage. This type of figurine is scarce in the North, but one piece from Arquinha da Moura⁹⁵ repeats formulas that are starting to be documented in Perdigoes⁹⁶, pointing to the IV millennium BC as a probable date of origin. The sculptural representation of one of the supports of the dolmen of Pozuelo 3, in Huelva, is related to these forms in its most naturalistic version⁹⁷.

An uncommon point of view — until now — reveals that the denominated «idols» of portable art associated with the iconography of the South and Southwest Iberia appear in the dolmens' orthostats of the Northwest. This is true in the case of the oculars, one of which was detected in one of the supports of the dolmen of Chã de Parada 1, in the Aboboreira mountain range⁹⁸. Its arrangement in two very close circles is like that of the ocular painted in black in one of the jambs of the dolmen of Alberite, in Cádiz⁹⁹. There is also an ocular painted on the front of the dolmen of Madorras. The presence of this type of form in painted northwestern Iberian rock shelters was expected in the framework of a series of findings among which circular forms and suns were present in the schematic art of Northern Portugal, as well as some of its megaliths¹⁰⁰.

In the South, the latest work on the famous reused stele of the dolmen of Soto further references the role of oculars in the iconography of this rich megalith¹⁰¹. The spectacular conservation of the tomb of Montelirio, in Seville, has cultivated binary associations, like those reflected in the anthropomorphs described above, in addition to its close relationship with the location of an exempt stele inside the chamber. The oculars painted in white, in the dolmen of Cabeço da Anta in Proença-a-Nova, are added to the engravings

⁹² FAURE, SOUSA, 2005.

⁹³ BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2018: 183; MARTÍNEZ GARCIA, 1988.

⁹⁴ BREUIL, 1935; GONÇALVES, 2006.

⁹⁵ CUNHA, 1995; SANTOS, CRUZ, BARBOSA, 2017: 47.

⁹⁶ MILESI, LLISTERRI CARO, FERNÁNDEZ RUIZ, 2013.

⁹⁷ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2017.

⁹⁸ SOUSA, 1989; JORGE, 1992.

⁹⁹ BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 1999.

¹⁰⁰ BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2012; CRUZ, VILAÇA, 1990; SANCHES, 2016; SANCHES, MORAIS, TEIXEIRA, 2016.

¹⁰¹ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2018: 211.

in one of the monuments of Panoria, in Granada, with the interest that in both cases, they are also associated with liminal steles in central areas of both monuments.

The main representation of ordered geometrical decorations like those on decorated plaques is another example of the iconography of Megalithic art¹⁰². The organization in horizontal and vertical strips sometimes reiterates completely identical patterns, as in the case of the head support of Chão Redondo 2 (Northwest Iberia) and the plaque of El Esparralejo, in the Southwest area. In this context, the representation of a plaque in the front orthostat of Antelas provides a direct dating of the IV millennium for these objects whose greatest dispersion is in the Southwest¹⁰³. Perhaps we can add the representation on the front of Mota Grande, although it recalls the technique of representations in the territory of Dombate. In any case, it is a monument that would require a detailed study due to the scraping technique used in the decoration of the dolmen of Portela do Pau, which we have detected in the re-study of the exempt menhir of chamber H of Barnenez's tumulus¹⁰⁴, one of the oldest pieces of this type recognized in the context of European megalithism. The sculptural sense of some supports is indisputable. This is true of the plaque with the outstanding head of the dolmen of Pozuelo 4, in Huelva, as well as the stele located at the access of the tholos of Palacio III, in Seville¹⁰⁵.

Decorated plaques also appear engraved on the supports of the Areita dolmen¹⁰⁶, adding one more version of these supposedly unknown movable objects in the North of Portugal. The plaques images of the rock shelter of Cachão da Rapa, the plaque with red paint on the dolmen of Madorras, the one of Mamaltar of Vale das Fachas¹⁰⁷ (decorated as one megalithic support), as well as the decorated plaque of Galicia¹⁰⁸, propose a greater representation of these iconographies than previously assumed. In this sense, the meticulous revision of small pieces of the monuments' external area will provide more data, since some of them repeat forms of the decorated plaques¹⁰⁹ or classic forms of the betiles that, as in the case of Madorras I, also carry painting¹¹⁰.

If we put these data together, it seems reasonable to assume that the human images represented in the Iberian megaliths are a way of expressing the origins of the buried group, its links with other groups and its connections with ancestral pasts. In short, they are identifiers¹¹¹ that are exhibited in monuments that house the memory of generations.

¹⁰² BUENO RAMÍREZ, 1992, 2010; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2002; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2005: Fig. 14.

¹⁰³ CASTRO, 1957; BUENO RAMÍREZ, 2020: 206.

¹⁰⁴ BAPTISTA, 1997; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2015a: 64; JORGE *et al.*, 1997.

¹⁰⁵ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2007, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ GOMES *et al.*, 1998.

¹⁰⁷ ALMAGRO GORBEA, 1973; FIGUEIREDO, 2013; SANCHES *et al.*, 2021; SANTOS JÚNIOR, 1934.

¹⁰⁸ BUENO RAMÍREZ, FÁBREGAS VALCARCE, BARCIELA GARRIDO, 2003.

¹⁰⁹ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2010; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2011.

¹¹⁰ CRUZ, GONÇALVES, 1995.

¹¹¹ BUENO RAMÍREZ, 1992, 2010, 2020; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1997b; VALERA, 2020.

5. CONNECTING MATERIALITIES IN IBERIAN MEGALITHIC ART

Megalithic art in the Iberian Peninsula has allowed us to overcome certain discussions about post-glacial art. The most evident is that in which engraving and painting are distinguished as two mutually exclusive techniques. The decoration of the megaliths demonstrate their contemporaneity while allowing for precise superimpositions of themes and techniques, events of reuse and re-painting that have allowed directly dating¹¹². These novelties also extend to other European megaliths, where the discovery of paintings opens expectations for a renewed reading of Megalithic iconographies and provides direct dating that confirms the broad diachrony verified in Iberia, including processes of decoration maintenance through repainting¹¹³. The chronologies for the concentric circular themes are confirmed in the same antiquity, situating the start of the IV millennium BC as a moment of wide extension of these forms, both in megaliths and in the open-air¹¹⁴. If megalithic art is Atlantic, the iconographies known in the Breton, Irish, British and Iberian tombs characterize it as a combination of themes and techniques already consolidated in the first moments of the construction of these death scenes¹¹⁵.

The supposed absence of painted rock-shelters in the Northwest is one more hurdle feature of some prehistories assumed without any negative or positive supporting research. With the data we had at the beginning of the 2000s, Megalithic art was presented as the oldest evidence of schematic painting in the Iberian Peninsula, directly dated — hence our repeated recommendation to intensively prospect in sectors such as those that have now renewed the knowledge of schematic art¹¹⁶. The insertion of decorated megaliths with other graphic markers in occupations of the territory is an unquestionable way to establish more integrative readings of late Iberian and European Prehistoric iconographies¹¹⁷.

The Iberian Peninsula offers a unique comparison to Europe. We refer to the evidence of similar symbolologies in open-air and portable art supports, which adjust the large extension of these forms, their long diachrony and their diverse roles in different contexts. In that sense, «extracting» the concentric circles do not cease to be an intellectual and «actualistic» exercise.

To all these observations we must add the antiquity of schematic art in the Iberian interior and western areas. The direct dating of schematic human figures in Palomera

¹¹² BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, in press; CARRERA RAMÍREZ, 2008; CARRERA RAMÍREZ, FÁBREGAS VALCARCE, 2002.

¹¹³ ARMITAGE *et al.*, 2020; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2007; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2019; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, in press.

¹¹⁴ BRADLEY, WATSON, STYLE, 2019; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2015b, 2018.

¹¹⁵ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2012: 146.

¹¹⁶ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2004; 2007: 640; 2016b: 189; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2011.

¹¹⁷ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2016b.

Cave, which we link to the origins of these formulas, has been recently ratified¹¹⁸. One of the figures with open arms and a mantle up to the feet presents the same formula as the individuals with open arms printed on some cardial ceramics, reminding us of the images of skeumorphs. To these figures painted and dated directly, we can add the references to portable objects dated in the Portuguese Douro, in the Fariseu's site¹¹⁹. Ramiforms painted and engraved next to anthropomorphic arms in handle, dated between the X and IX millennium as the images of Palomera Cave, confirm old routes of schematic formulas in unknown sectors of the Iberian Peninsula. It is not a question of showing parallels, but rather considering the evidence of several human images fixed in very concrete attitudes since their first representations. The study of the graphic materialities contributes solid evidence in favor of persistent cultural features of tradition in the gestation of the Neolithic symbolism.

The schematic art in the Iberian dolmens of the Northwest is not a «Mediterranean» repertoire, but rather a development with much personality originating from techniques and themes with a long history.

Its rich display on Iberian megaliths provides interesting elements to verify that schematic art does not present a single formula of human images but is associated with the repertoires of the Iberian and European rock-shelters, including their association with zoomorphs in hunting scenes. Hunted deer appear in a lot of Iberian schematic art, as well as other European contexts¹²⁰. The prominence of the deer is repeated in the decoration of vessels from the III millennium, both in the so-called symbolic and Bell-Beaker, ensuring a parallel path between the development of these themes in the dolmens and outdoors or in portable supports, including ceramics from the VI to the III advanced millennium, at least¹²¹.

Hunting, lineage and couples or groups of diverse individuals are the most repeated scenes, coinciding with the most common in schematic art. In all cases, the sum of anthropomorphs is more abundant than usual in the painted rock-shelters, situating the most revealing narrative theme of the funerary iconography in stories that feature human figures, and in the hierarchization of the same. The inclusion of these impactful forms in these narratives throughout the southwestern area adds a novel element that provides, on the one hand, a chronology for the small mobile figures, and on the other, the certainty that these are known and used in the North like in the South, as recent documentation is beginning to attest¹²².

¹¹⁸ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2012, 2016, 2020; CORCHON *et al.*, 1996; ORTEGA-MARTÍNEZ *et al.*, 2020.

¹¹⁹ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2020; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, ALCOLEA GONZALEZ, 2007, 2009; SANTOS *et al.*, 2018.

¹²⁰ DEFRASNE *et al.*, 2019.

¹²¹ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2017: 333.

¹²² BUENO RAMÍREZ, 2020; FÁBREGAS VALCARCE, RODRÍGUEZ RELLÁN, PAZ CAMAÑO, 2020; SANCHES *et al.*, 2021.

The absences attributable to hidden images have suffered the same consequence, and today they cannot be maintained before the spectacular paintings of the Abrigo de las Oculadas or Pala de Cabras¹²³. Both rock-shelters are the tip of an iceberg that already announced the images of Chã de Parada or Madorras I. The archaeological context of both dolmens — with IV millennium BC chronologies — is a good reference for the rock-shelters referred to by relevant archaeological research. The image of skeuomorph of Baleira has contributed a context dated C14 of the IV millennium cal BC for figures in Galicia, fully compatible with those we know in the dolmens of Viseu.

To our current knowledge of Iberian Megalithic art, this is not a compact graphic version. As it was the case with Palaeolithic art, a general style is recognizable, as well as solutions that apply to specific areas. The group from Viseu personified the whole of Iberian painted Megalithic art, but the engravings have a role that had been underestimated. The detailed analysis of its themes and graphic organization shows some differences between the Megalithic decorations of other areas on the Iberian Peninsula, as well as interesting concordances¹²⁴. These differences are best understood by evaluating the set of open-air schematic versions in these territories.

In the rest of Iberia, the abundance of wavy and angled geometries framing the orthostats or covering them in their entirety is also associated with human figures occupying predominant positions. The basic iconography of geometric content is shared, sometimes framing objects like axes or crocks, accompanying human images like oculars, or including various types of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures¹²⁵. Complex circles in the Iberian megaliths have their greatest representation outside the northwest, bringing the iconographies of the rest of the Peninsula closer to those that defined Atlantic art in the megalith — an aspect that we consider possibly related to the lack of research on engraved decorations of the Northwest megaliths, rather than a drastic difference of iconographic character. It is, at least, an aspect that will have to be documented further.

Without the slightest intention of extending ourselves in parallel with schematic painted art, there are some revealing aspects that apply to two of the most emblematic iconographies:

1. The skeuomorphic image of Baleira's rock-shelter confirms the existence of a schematic art of naturalistic tendency (in the sense of representations of human images with volume), extended from the beginning of the IV millennium BC and fully contemporary to the first megaliths. Its relationship to images with ancient roots in the repertoire of the last hunters is convincing.

¹²³ SANCHES, 2016; SANTOS-ESTEVEZ, TEJERIZO-GARCÍA, ALONSO TOUCIDO, 2020.

¹²⁴ BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1992, 1997a; SANCHES, 2010; SANTOS, CRUZ, BARBOSA, 2017: 28.

¹²⁵ BARROSO BERMEJO, BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2021; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2013; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2016a, 2018; CALADO, 2002.

2. The presence of oculars (sun-eyes) in dolmens also has its counterpart in painted rock-shelters whose number and iconographic repertoire will grow. Their chronology in the early stages of megaliths is also contrasted.

In the more general framework, concentric circular decorations (perhaps abstracted images of the sun) in the megaliths of the Atlantic façade have evidence dated in the V and IV millennium BC. Therefore, the chronological *decalage* that explained the stylistic differences cannot be maintained. Further, the use of portable figurines is blurred, considering the increase of references in Iberian megalithic contexts throughout the Peninsula and its representation in the Megalithic supports themselves, either through painted, engraved or sculpted images, both in the North and South of the Iberian Peninsula. This hypothesis can be easily transferred to other Atlantic megaliths, as we have detailed above.

Undoubtedly, to our current knowledge, the set of Megalithic art iconographies appears to have the greatest prominence of human figures and the greatest concentration of scenes of all Iberian schematic art.

It seems reasonable to deduce from the data briefly summarized here that Megalithic art reveals a multiple composition of Iberian post-glacial graphic expressions, far from the compartments assigned to the frontiers of Atlanticism and Mediterraneanism. The differences in some of the figures are related to recognizable aspects of identity in the portable repertoire, which has more representation than in the decoration of the Megalithic supports themselves. The figurines are models of the representations made on the walls of the monuments. Their applications of color, the depiction of their clothing and even the sun eyes, sometimes expressed in concentric circles, confirm that the combination of techniques and themes is the most outstanding feature of megalithic art¹²⁶.

The graphic, technical, social and chronological information provided by megalithic art cannot be separated from the contemporary evidence being produced in the open-air. To compartmentalize cultural expressions as closed environments is a mistake if we want to establish interpretations that are coherent with the complexity of post-glacial symbolism.

Megalithic art is a «major art» among post-glacial expressions, which also applies to its themes. Inside the funerary chambers, narratives are materialized, expressed with all the technical and thematic deployment of these groups: painting, engraving and sculpture, all capturing anthropomorphic themes, suns, complex circles, zoomorphic and diverse objects. Recurrent mythographies of individuals associated with the sun are added to more everyday scenes of a family or social nature. This is a major art not only for its technical compilation, but also for its thematic compilation. Its association with the world of death, in the cult of the ancestors and its exhibition, is one of the greatest ideological weights of the social organization of the builders of megaliths.

¹²⁶ BUENO RAMÍREZ, 2010, 2020; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2005, 2017.

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Fig. 1. Location and engraved circles from: 1 — Mota Grande; 2 — Arroyo de las Sileras; 3 — Oles; 4 — Azután; 5 — Portela do Pau; 6 — Montpedrós; 7 — Passanant 2; 8 — Pola de Allande; 9 — KT S2; 10 — Mendigana; 11 — Sorbituaga; 12 — Errekatxuetaka Atxa from BUENO RAMIREZ *et al.*, 2009; JORGE *et al.*, 1997: Fig. LXI; MARTÍNEZ *et al.*, 2016; MOYA I GARRA, MARTÍNEZ RODRIGUEZ, LÓPEZ-MELCIÓN, 2010

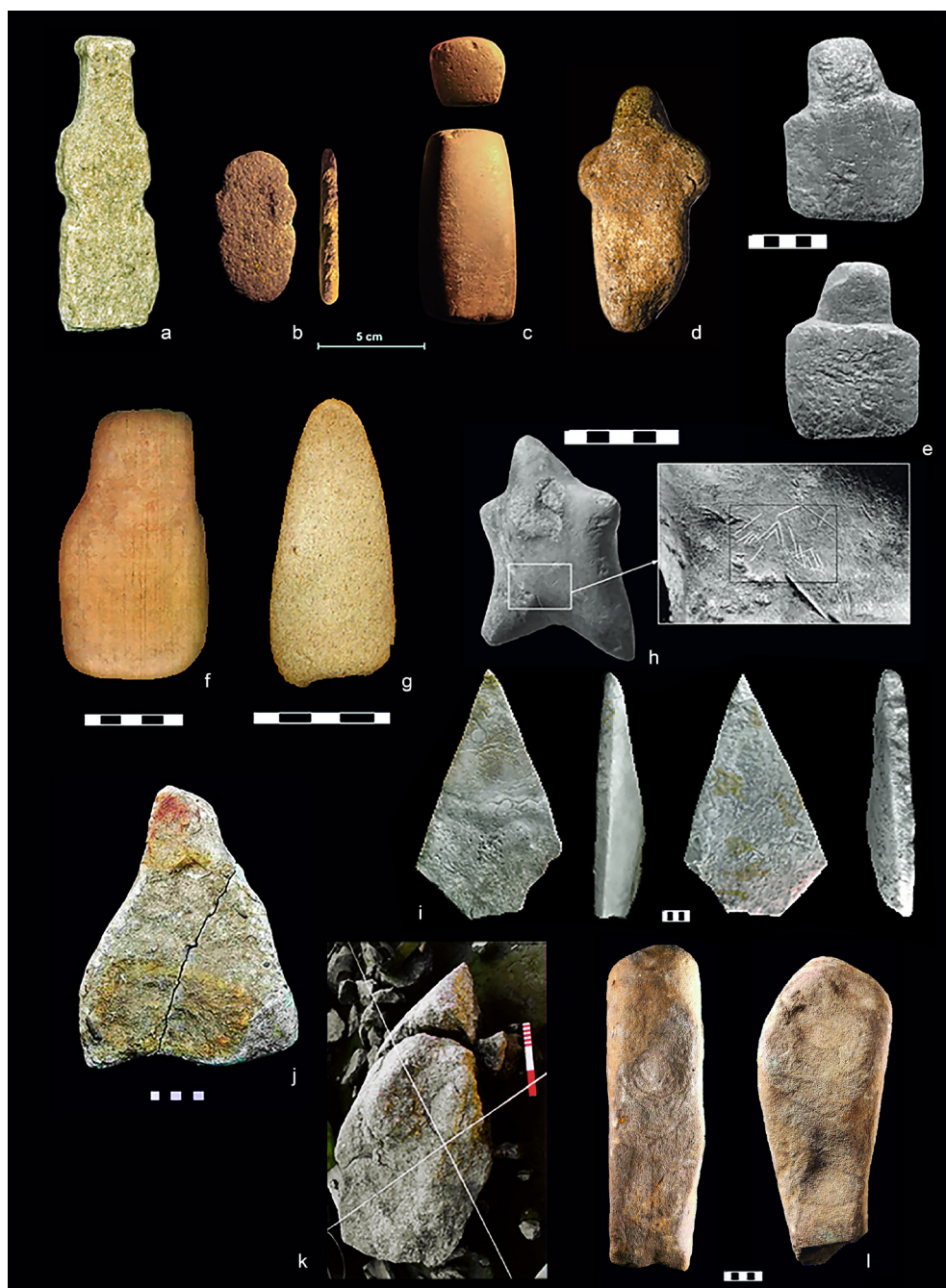


Fig. 2. Small megalithic steles: a. Dombate; b.,c. Monte dos Remédios; d. Pumares; e. Westray; f., g. Douet; h. Pool Sanday; i. Bury; j. L'Hirondelle; k. Bois de Fourgo; l. Mendigana, from BENETAU, 2012; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2009; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBIN BEHRMANN, 2019a; FÁBREGAS VALCARCE *et al.*, 2020; HERNANZ *et al.*, 2016; LARGE, 2010

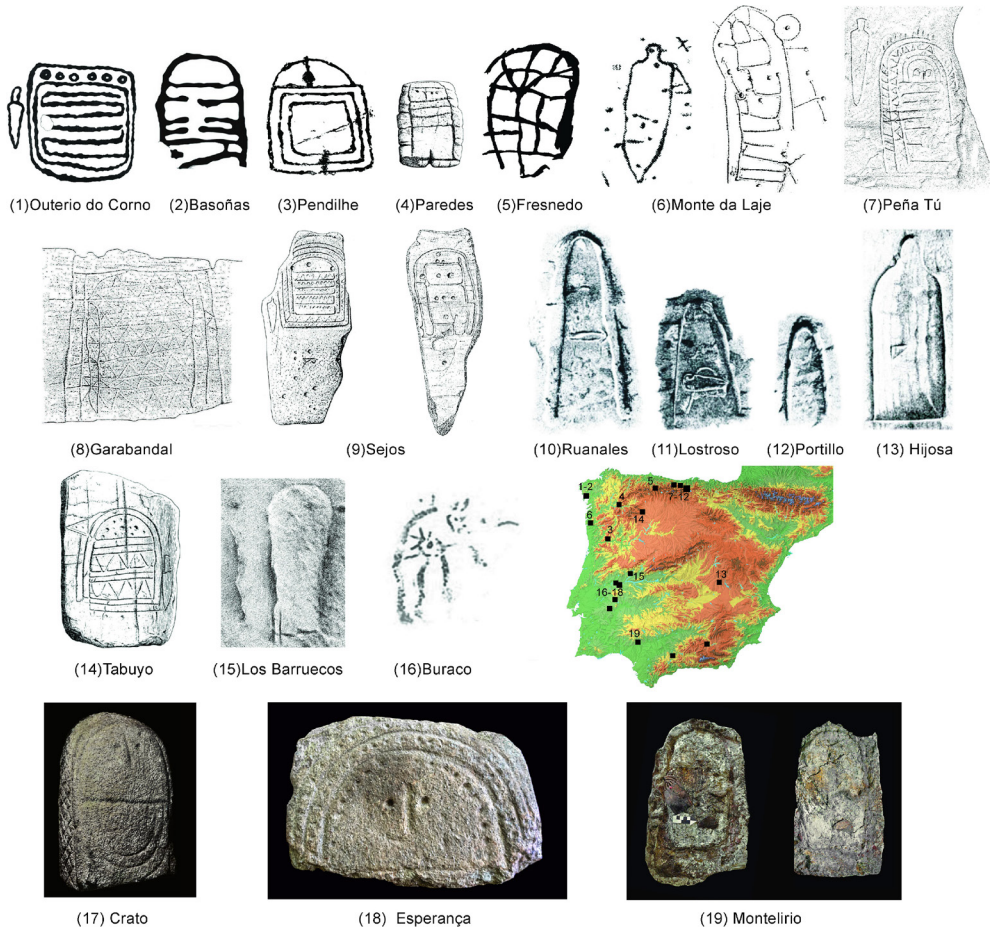


Fig. 3. Steles and panels-stele from BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2005; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BARROSO BERMEJO, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 2011, and its location in the Iberian Peninsula

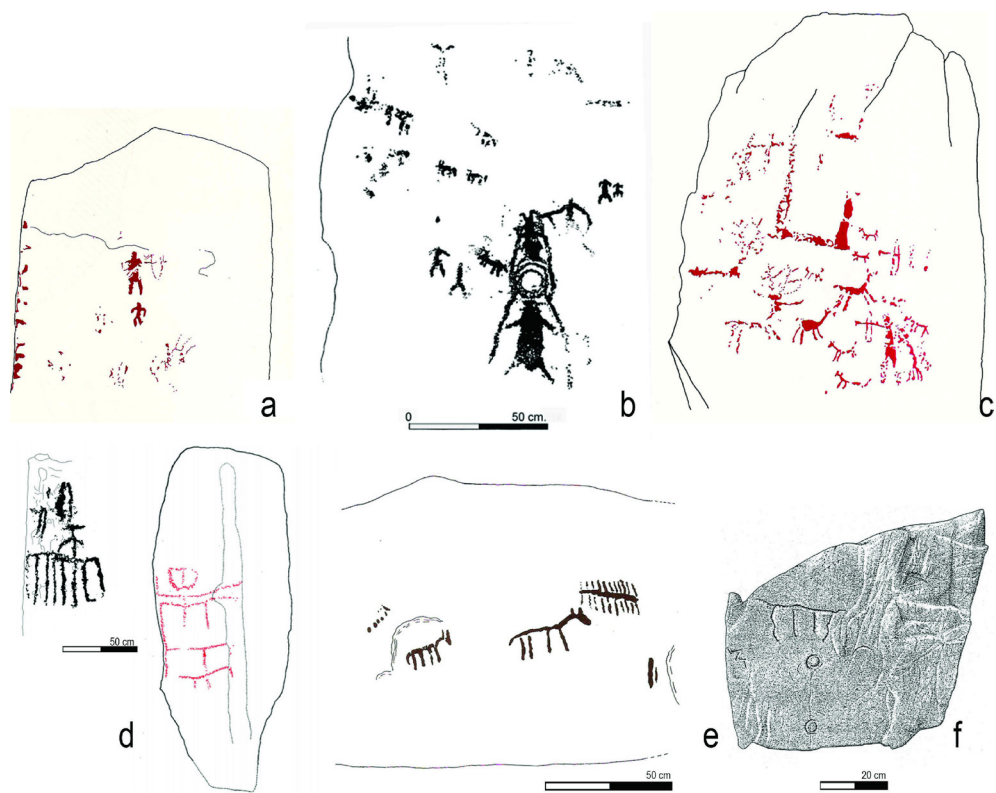


Fig. 4. Megalithic hunting scenes and zoomorphs representations: a. Lubagueira L6; b. Orca dos Juncals; c. Arquinha da Moura; d. Picoto do Vasco; e. Cubillejo de Lara; f. Maimón 2, from BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2004; CUNHA, 1995; SANTOS, CRUZ, BARBOSA, 2017; SHEETWOHIG, 1981



Fig. 5. Skeuomorphs and anthropomorphs megalithic representations: a. Orca dos Juncais C4 y C7; b. Tanque; c. Arquinha da Moura C2; d. Castanheira; e. Lubagueira; f. Porto; g. Lubagueira; h. Antelas; i. Golada; j. Soto; k. Padrão; l. Afife; m-n. Picoto do Vasco; o. Soto; p. Fojinho; q. Forles; r. Menga; s. Viera, t. Cueva del Demo; u. Baleira from BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2013, 2018; FÁBREGAS VALCARCE, PENEDO ROMERO, 2001; RODRÍGUEZ RELLÁN *et al.*, 2019; SANTOS, CRUZ, BARBOSA, 2017; SHEE TWOHIG, 1981

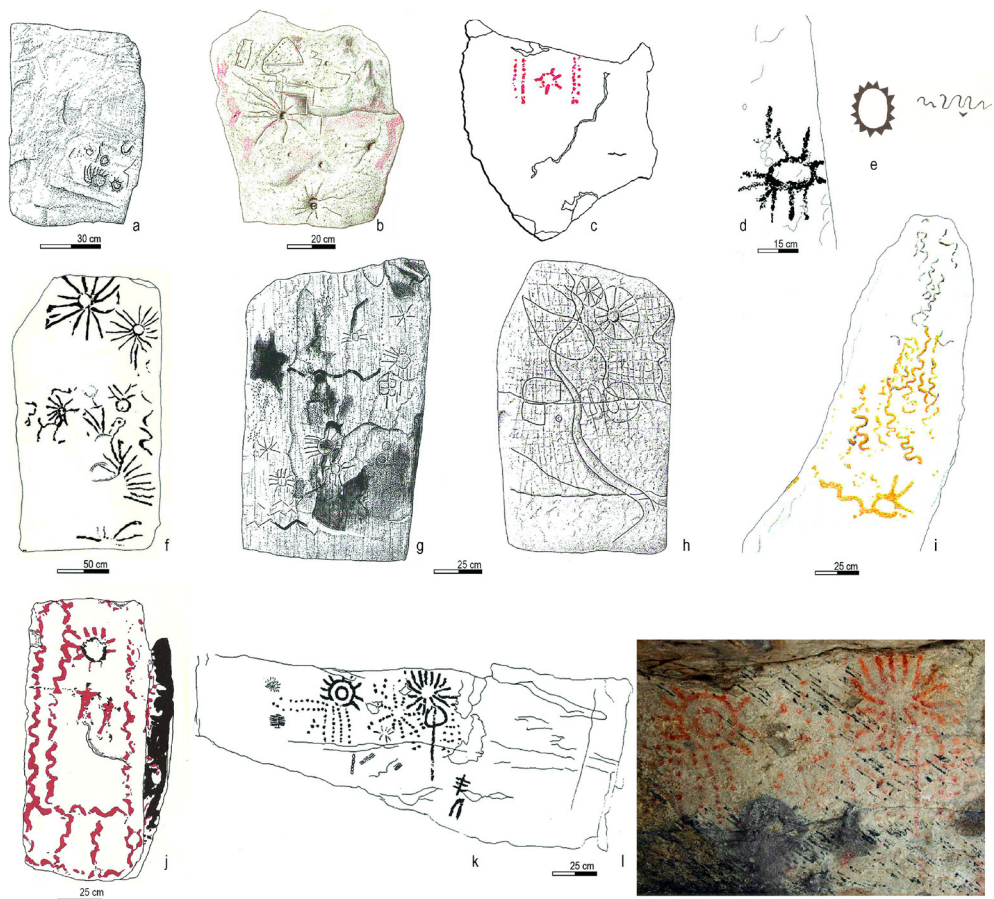


Fig. 6. Suns representations: a. Trincones; b. Alberite; c. Leandro 5; d. Picoto do Vasco; e. Lijo; f. Carapito; g., h. Toniñuelo; i. El Juncal; j. Porto; k., l. Rock shelter of Pala Pinta from BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1996, 1997; BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, BARROSO BERMEJO, 2004; CARRERA RAMÍREZ, 2011; OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2017; Fig. 5; SHEE TWOHIG, 1981; SOUSA, 1989

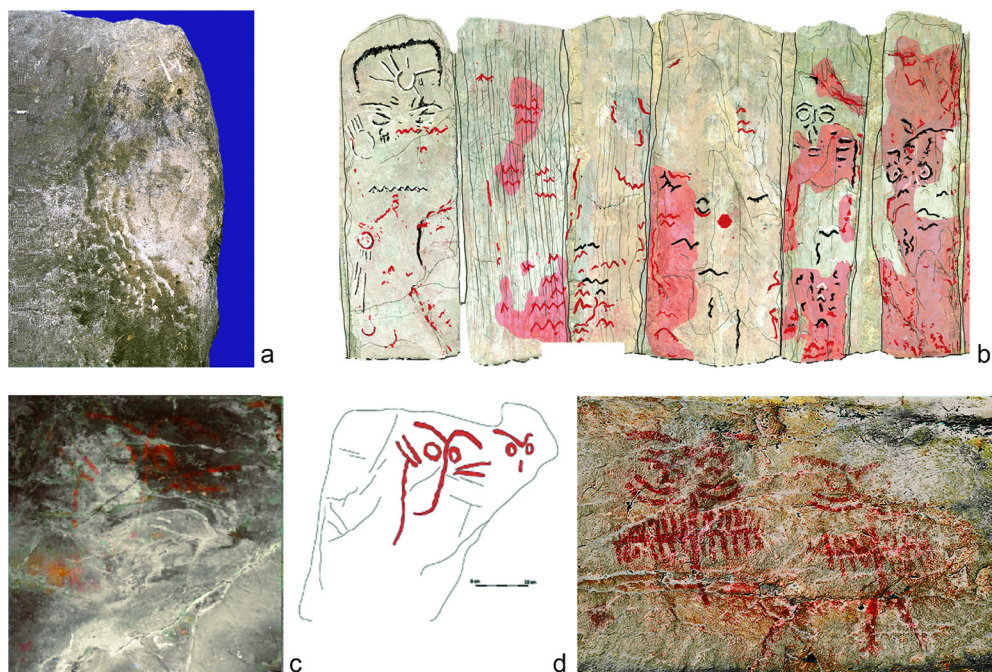


Fig. 7. Ocular representations: a. Alberite; b. Montelirio; c. Pala das Cabras; d. Serra dos Passos from BUENO RAMÍREZ, BALBÍN BEHRMANN, 1996; BUENO RAMÍREZ *et al.*, 2016b; SANCHES, 1990; SANTOS-ESTEVEZ, TEJERIZO-GARCÍA, ALONSO TOUCIDO, 2020

